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ABSTRACT

This telephone survey of Ohio adults was intended to gauge attitudes on a range of educational issues. Main findings were: (1) education is important, but its true value is not fully understood; (2) Ohioans appreciate the benefits of early childhood education and preparation for school; (3) individualized attention in the formative years is important; (4) the public perceives an educational crisis in Ohio; (5) some populations at risk may go unnoticed; and (6) Ohioans overestimate the number of adults who have completed a college degree. Detailed findings are presented in the areas of the value of education, special populations, early childhood education, the formative years, school facilities, higher education and access to college, and demographics. (EV)

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Ohio's Education Matters:

2000-2001 Poll

Knowledgeworks Foundation

2001

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I. Introduction

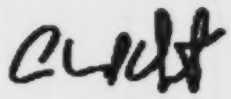
KnowledgeWorks Foundation, established in 1998 as a statewide philanthropic partner in education, is committed to increasing the number of people who value and access education by removing barriers to educational opportunity.

In 1999, the Foundation launched a major effort for education in our state by founding the Ohio College Access Network, a consortium of programs that help needy students get to college. On the other end of the spectrum, the organization played a feature role in early childhood education by supporting RISE Learning Solutions distance learning programs for parents and caregivers throughout the state.

The sale of the Student Loan Funding Corporation to Sallie Mae in July 2000 grew KnowledgeWorks Foundation's assets dramatically, enabling the Foundation to take an active leadership role in its mission of removing barriers to educational opportunity. As such, KnowledgeWorks Foundation commissioned its first annual poll of Ohioans devoted specifically to the state of education in Ohio.

The **KnowledgeWorks Foundation Poll 2000: Ohio's Education Matters,** conducted by Paul Werth Associates in Columbus, presents an accurate understanding of Ohioans' views, perceptions, hopes and goals for the state of education in Ohio. This poll will be conducted annually, and we hope it will create a legacy as a reliable resource for policy-makers, community leaders, teachers, administrators, philanthropic partners, parents and students—everyone who cares about education in Ohio.

The KnowledgeWorks Foundation Poll 2000 is the cornerstone of the Foundation's strategic direction to develop best practices and a body of knowledge that results from public and private collaborations that work to remove barriers to education. At KnowledgeWorks Foundation, we feel it is our responsibility and obligation to share the lessons learned and knowledge gained from these partnerships around Ohio. We are pleased to share the results of this poll as the first step in helping to better inform our state. Because, as we are sure you will agree, Ohio's education most certainly does matter.



Chad P. Wick
President & CEO
KnowledgeWorks Foundation

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Who We Are

KnowledgeWorks Foundation was created in 1998 as a charitable foundation through the reorganization of the Student Loan Funding Corporation. The mission of KnowledgeWorks Foundation is to increase the number of people who value and access education by removing barriers to educational opportunity.

With more than $200 million in assets, KnowledgeWorks Foundation is one of Ohio's largest philanthropic partners in education. The Foundation develops collaborations that work to remove barriers to education. KnowledgeWorks Foundation is committed to sharing lessons learned and knowledge gained from these public-private education partnerships with Ohio's communities, educators, and decision-makers.

Already involved in the fields of college access and early childhood education, KnowledgeWorks Foundation adopted an expanded strategic direction in 2000 to include issue areas such as educational needs of children in substitute care, school facilities planning, school-to-career, and education and training needs of low-wage workers.

Issue Areas

College Access	KnowledgeWorks Foundation is committed to ensuring that all qualified Ohio students have the information and financial resources they need to access post-secondary education. The goal of supporting college access initiatives is to increase degree attainment rate in Ohio, not only for the development of each student but also in support of Ohio's economic future. In 1999, the Foundation helped form the Ohio College Access Network (OCAN) to promote access to college by sharing information among existing access programs and creating new access programs in under-served areas.
School Facilities Planning	More than half of Ohio's schools are 50 years old or older. To remedy the situation, the State of Ohio has proposed a plan to spend more than $23 billion on new school construction over the next 12 years, allocating $10.2 billion to school construction, matched by $12.9 billion in local dollars. KnowledgeWorks Foundation will support community engagement initiatives to improve the school facilities planning processes and ensure that the substantial amount of local and state funds are used effectively by: (1) infusing the local planning process with information about the impact of school facilities on learning outcomes, and (2) promoting the concept of "schools as centers of community," where school district leadership involves the community in school facility planning and school buildings have multiple uses for the benefit of the community.
Education Needs of Children in Substitute Care	KnowledgeWorks Foundation is committed to ensuring that children in substitute care (foster care, kinship care, etc.) receive the education necessary to become successful, productive adults. To this end, the Foundation supports initiatives that address special curriculum needs, provide training, case consultation, and advocacy, and document the education needs and obstacles for children in substitute care in Ohio.

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Early Childhood Education	To ensure normal, healthy development each child must be immersed in a healthy and stimulating environment. KnowledgeWorks Foundation is committed to supporting initiatives that strive to improve the quality of early childhood education. High quality early childhood education is critical to the development of each child's capacity to learn and hence to succeed in elementary and secondary education.
School-to-Career	To complement the Foundation's efforts in college access, KnowledgeWorks Foundation will focus on the development of initiatives that connect school curriculum to career awareness and opportunity. School-to-career efforts ensure that all students, regardless of post-secondary plans, are prepared to succeed in the world of work and education.
Education & Training Needs of Low Wage Workers	KnowledgeWorks Foundation will support programs that train and educate low-wage workers. The goal is to help low-wage workers, including persons exiting the welfare system, access the education and training necessary for stable, meaningful employment and advancement in their careers. To foster these programs the Foundation will facilitate information sharing, and promote the development new education and training programs, both geographically and industry-focused, in under-served areas.

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Research Methodology

The survey was designed by Paul Werth Associates' Research Services Group and the KnowledgeWorks Foundation and was implemented by the Strategic Research Group (SRG) based in Columbus, Ohio.

This poll consisted of a random state-wide telephone survey of 500 adults with a 65% response rate. The sample was randomly drawn from all possible exchange and working block combinations in Ohio using a list-assisted sampling methodology. This two-stage procedure identifies exchanges during the First Stage and "working blocks" during the Second Stage. Once all exchange-working block combinations were identified, a random sample was drawn from all possible combinations.

Once a household was identified all adults 18 years old or older were enumerated. A respondent was eligible to participate in the survey if he or she was at least 18 years of age and was an Ohio resident. If the household had only one eligible person, interviewers attempted to gain consent from that person to participate in the study. For households with more than one eligible adult the "next birthday" method of respondent selection was used to randomly select the respondent. The "next birthday" method was administered by first asking how many people live in the household fitting the eligibility criteria and then asking which of those people has the next birthday. The resident of the household who had the next birthday became the respondent.

The data collection effort was conducted by SRG's professional telephone interviewing staff. Interviewers received extensive training in interviewing skills as well as an additional training session tailored to this specific project. All interviewing was conducted at SRG's offices at 995 Goodale Boulevard in Columbus

The following procedures were used to assure quality:

1. Interviewers were directly supervised at all times.
2. Supervisors verified fifteen percent of all completed interviews.
3. Interviews were monitored on a regular basis.
4. Interviewers attempted to complete an interview by calling at least 4 times on different times of day and different days of the week, or until the case was declared a nonresponse by a supervisor.
5. Following a completed interview, a supervisor reviewed the questionnaire for omissions, errors, and to ensure that open-ended text responses were complete and understandable.
6. The interviewer re-called all cases with inadequate responses.
7. Telephone interviews were conducted using the University of California, Berkeley CASES system.

All survey estimates will have an overall margin of error of _ 4% at the 95% confidence level.

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II. Executive Summary

Finding One: Education is important, but its true value is not fully understood

Although education is seen as an important issue, its true value is vastly underappreciated. Ohioans overestimate the cost of education and underestimate the benefits. For example:

- Nearly 70 percent of survey respondents underestimated the amount of money Ohio public schools spend per student per year. The median estimate was $5,000.00. In the 1998-99 school year, the actual average expenditure per student was $6,642.00.

- Survey respondents recognize that the average worker's earning potential increases with a college education, but they significantly underestimated just how great that difference truly is. Below are respondents' salary estimates for the salary of a male age 35-44 working full time in Ohio compared to actual figures from the Bureau of the Census.

	HS Degree Only	College Degree
Survey Estimate	$30,103.29	$46,803.38
1990 Census–Ohio only	$31,917.00	$54,632.00
1990 Census - National	$28,927.00	$52,457.00
1998 National Population Survey	$34,786.00	$70,871.00

- Seventy-nine percent of respondents acknowledged that a college education is necessary to achieve worthwhile employment in the 21st century, and 80 percent agree that a college education is accessible to anyone who chooses to pursue it. Respondents' estimates of tuition costs, however, were twice as high as they are in reality. On average, tuition for Ohio's public four-year colleges and universities in the 1996-97 academic year was $3,834.00 per year. The average estimate was $10,903.00, indicating that the perceived cost of higher education remains a barrier.

Finding Two: Ohioans appreciate the benefits of early childhood education and preparation for school

The first three years of life are critically important for brain development, as interconnections form between neurons, or brain cells. New synapses, connections between cells, are constantly being formed at a rapid rate. By eight months of age a baby may have an astounding 1,000 trillion synapses in the brain. Early experiences and cognitive stimulation during this time can have a dramatic impact on brain development that lasts well into adulthood.

Survey respondents demonstrated an appreciation for early childhood education, and recognized the benefits of beginning educational activities as early as age 1 or 2. In fact, a clear majority of respondents recognized the importance of reading to children from an early age, with 63 percent indicating that parents should begin reading to their children at birth.

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Finding Three: Individualized attention in the formative years is important

In terms of improving our educational system, Ohioans see increasing individualized attention and support as important for cultivating educational achievement. Increasing parent involvement was seen as critical in improving the quality of Ohio's schools. Furthermore, those who have the most daily contact with students—parents and teachers—are seen as having the greatest influence to effect change in the quality of education children receive.

Consistent with an appreciation for increased student-teacher interaction, 76 percent of respondents supported efforts to renovate or replace outdated school facilities and 82 percent agreed that smaller class sizes improve student achievement. Respondents with children under the age of 18 were more likely to appreciate the benefits of smaller class sizes.

Survey respondents indicated they are willing to pay higher taxes, if necessary, to ensure that the problems in Ohio's education system are corrected. However, they must be assured that increased funding will be utilized as efficiently as possible to maximize the benefit to students.

Finding Four: The public perceives an educational crisis in Ohio

The subject of education has received a great deal of attention and concern from educators, policymakers, and parents alike. The general public is acutely aware that there are problems that need to be addressed. However, the perception that education is in crisis may prevent the public from recognizing real improvements.

Overall, Ohio's public schools were given a grade of "C+." On the other hand, local schools, the schools with which respondents should be most familiar, received higher marks, averaging a grade of "B." And those who have the most experience with their local schools—parents of children under age 18 —see the quality of education as improving compared to their own experience in school. Conversely, respondents without children under 18 were more likely to see the current system as declining compared to their own experience in school.

Together, these results indicate that the public has received the message that there are serious problems with Ohio's education system. However, those without direct exposure to schools may not be fully aware of current efforts to improve the system.

Finding Five: Some populations at risk may go unnoticed

Although survey respondents acknowledge the risk of low educational attainment due to poverty and minority status, they tended to underestimate the risk experienced for several other groups.

Children in foster care and children from rural schools were rated least at risk and more likely to attend college, compared to the average student. In reality, these groups experience unique risks that make them especially vulnerable to educational and economic disadvantage. For instance, children in substitute care are more likely to repeat a grade and less likely to graduate from high school or attend college. Furthermore, many of Ohio's rural and Appalachian students suffer from poverty and are far less likely to attend college or earn a college degree compared to students from other parts of the state.

Finding Six: Ohioans overestimate the number of adults who have completed a college degree

Higher education in Ohio is viewed very favorably, and the message that "college is possible" has clearly reached the general public. However, when asked to estimate the proportion of Ohio adults who have completed a college degree, estimates were much higher than the official estimate of 17 percent from the Census Bureau. The average estimate in this survey was 48 percent.

The most recent estimates available (estimates from the 1990 Census), indicate that just 17 percent of Ohioans had earned a four-year college degree. Although no more recent estimate is available, it can likely be assumed that the proportion of adults with college degrees has increased over the last decade, although it is unlikely to have increased threefold in just ten years.

Even respondents who had completed a degree overestimated the percentage. This is an indication that the significance of higher education and the value of a college degree are very salient, and that completing a college degree may be perceived as a social norm. Nonetheless, this misperception must be corrected before Ohio will realize the need to address student success and increased college completion.

III. The Value of Education

Education is clearly an important issue to Ohioans: 73 percent of respondents indicated it was "very important" that Ohio's educational system is one of the best is the nation. Respondents even expressed a willingness to pay higher taxes to improve the education system--if they can be assured that schools are maximizing their current budgets. However, respondents' perceptions of the cost of education varied. When asked to estimate how much, on average, Ohio schools spend per student per year, there were nearly as many respondents who underestimated the amount by 50 percent as there were who overestimated it by 50 percent.

Ohioans also value higher education; 68 percent indicated that they believe a college education is "very important." A clear majority (81 percent) agreed that an education beyond high school is necessary to achieve worthwhile employment in the 21st century. However, survey participants vastly overestimated the costs of higher education, estimating tuition costs to be almost twice as high as they are in reality.

Despite an obvious appreciation for the merits of higher education, the survey results indicated that many Ohioans do not have an accurate appreciation for the economic benefits a college education can provide. Statistics have repeatedly shown that college graduates, on average, have much greater earning potential over their lifetimes compared with workers who have not completed a college degree. To see whether Ohioans recognize this difference, we asked respondents to estimate how much, on average, the typical male worker with a college degree, age 35-45, earns per year in salary and also what the typical male worker with no college degree, age 35-45, earns per year in salary. Although, on average, respondents recognized that a college degree is associated with a higher average salary, they tended to underestimate just how much more the average worker can make with the experience of a college education.

How important is it to you personally that Ohio's education system is one of the best in the nation?

	Frequency	Percent
Very important	371	73.3
Somewhat important	86	17.0
Somewhat unimportant	29	5.7
Very unimportant	5	1.0
Don't Know (DK)	14	2.8
Refused (Rf)	1	.2
Total	560	100.0

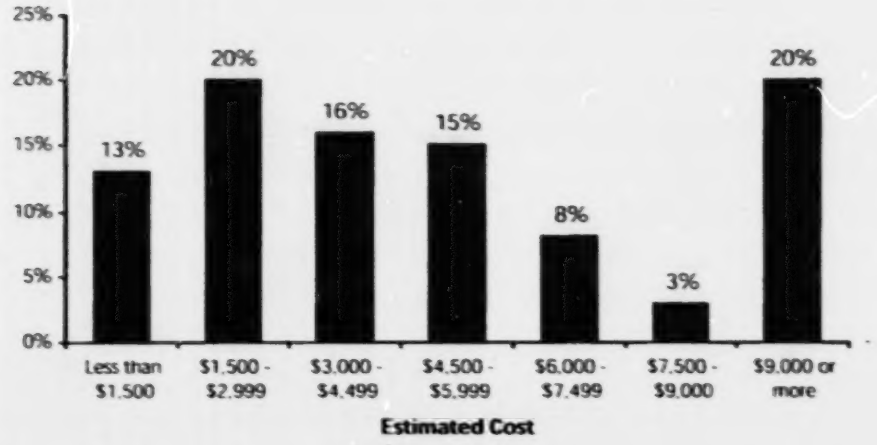
Approximately how much, on average, would you estimate that schools spend on one K-12 student in Ohio per year? Remember, this is an average across the state.

Mean	$8,075.94
Median	$5,000.00
Mode	$5,000.00

Actual average expenditure per student, 1998 - 1999: **$6,642.00**

Breakdown of funding: 46.4% state, 50.9% local, 3.47% federal
(Source: The Ohio Department of Education)

Estimates of School Expenditures Per Student



Are you willing to pay higher taxes to make Ohio's education system one of the best in the nation?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	340	67.2
No	138	27.3
DK	25	4.9
Rf	3	.6
Total	560	100.0

Do you favor or oppose spending money saved from welfare reform for additional education and training programs for unemployed adults and low-wage workers?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly favor	223	44.1
Somewhat favor	163	32.2
Undecided	30	5.9
Somewhat oppose	40	7.9
Strongly oppose	39	7.7
DK	11	2.22
Total	560	100.0

Do you agree or disagree: An education beyond high school is necessary to achieve worthwhile employment in the 21st century?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	214	42.3
Agree	189	37.4
No opinion	16	3.2
Disagree	76	15.0
Strongly disagree	10	2.0
DK	1	.2
Total	560	100.0

How important do you, personally, think a college education is?

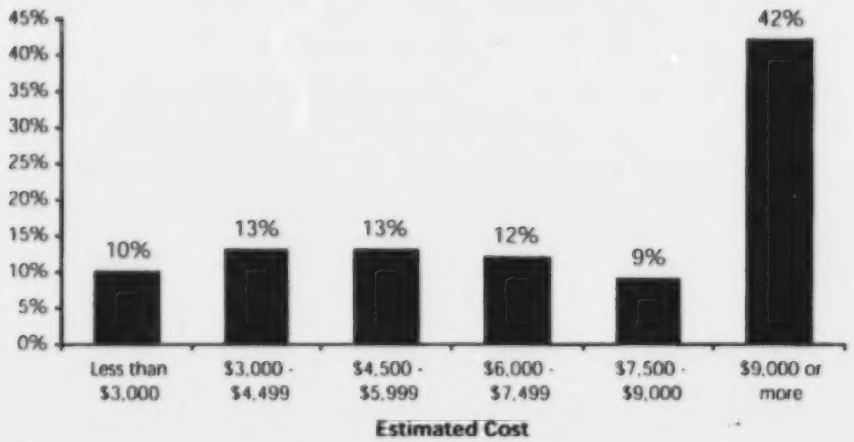
	Frequency	Percent
Very important	346	68.4
Somewhat important	128	25.3
Undecided	23	4.5
Somewhat unimportant	8	1.6
Very unimportant	1	.2
Total	560	100.0

Approximately how much would you estimate tuition costs at a four-year public college or university in Ohio per student, per year? This would be tuition only, do not include room and board.

Mean $10,903.40
Median $ 8,000.00
Mode $10,000.00

Actual cost: **$3, 834.00**
(Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 1996-97)

Estimates of Annual College Tuition



Although a more recent state average is not available, no doubt costs have risen slightly in the last four years. Below are estimated costs for in-state tuition and general fees for several Ohio institutions for academic year 2000 – 2001, according to each institution's web site:

The Ohio State University	$4,383.00
University of Cincinnati	$4,737.00
Ohio University	$5,085.00
University of Toledo	$4,415.52*
Miami University, Oxford	$6,462.00
Bowling Green State University	$4,890.00
Cleveland State University	$4,038.00

* Costs are from 1999 - 2000 academic year

Approximately how much do you think the average male Ohio resident, age 35-45, makes each year in salary, assuming full-time, year-round employment?

	Estimates Assuming College Degree		Estimates Assuming No College Degree	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Under $25,000	13	2.6	91	18.0
25,000 - 34,999	50	9.9	234	46.2
35,000 - 44,999	134	26.5	106	20.9
45,000 - 54,999	160	31.6	37	7.3
55,000 - 64,999	58	11.5	6	1.2
65,000 - 74,999	30	5.9	2	.4
Over $75,000	30	5.9	5	1.0
DK	30	5.9	24	4.8
RF	1	.2	1	.2
	506	100.0	506	100.0

Approximately how much do you think the average male Ohio resident, age 35-44, with a college degree, makes each year in salary, assuming full-time, year-round employment?

Mean	$46,803.38
Median	$45,000.00
Mode	$50,000.00

Actual average salary with four-year degree: **$54,632.00**

(Source: Bureau of the Census, 1990)

Approximately how much do you think the average male Ohio resident, age 35-44, without a college degree, makes each year in salary, assuming full-time, year-round employment?

Mean	$30,103.29
Median	$30,000.00
Mode	$25,000.00

Actual average salary without four-year degree: **$31,917.00**

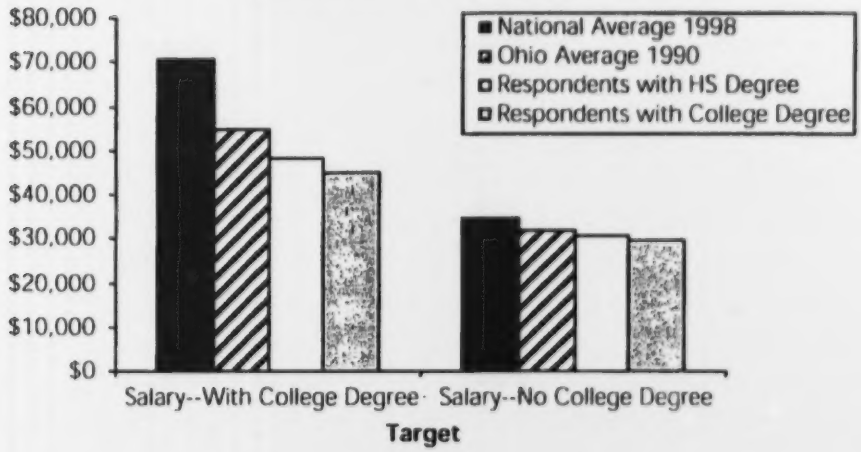
Although census data from 1990 clearly reflects the gap in salary for workers who have completed a four-year degree, it is likely that these figures have changed in the past decade. Although Ohio-specific data will not be available until the 2000 Census results are released in 2001, national estimates from the Census Bureau's 1998 Current Population Survey suggest this gap may have widened.

Actual average salary with four-year degree: **$70,871.00**

Actual average salary without four-year degree: **$34,786.00**

(Source: Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 1998)

Average Salary Estimates Based on Respondents' Educational Attainment



IV. Special Populations—Who is At Risk?

According to the National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students, Congress defines an "at-risk student" as one who—because of limited English proficiency, poverty, race, geographic location, or economic disadvantage—faces a greater risk of low educational achievement or reduced academic expectations.

Although the risks faced by some groups of students are well known and documented, the unique risks and challenges in the educational system faced by some types of students are less well known.

Survey respondents were well aware of the risks faced by children in the inner city, poor or low-income children, and minority children, but may be underestimating the risks faced by rural children, children in foster care, and home-schooled children.

Perceptions of Risk

Respondents were asked to rate several groups of students in terms of their risk of receiving a lower quality education. Ratings were made on a 5-point scale, from "not at risk"(1) to "at extreme risk"(5).

First, rating scores were analyzed using a repeated measures analysis of variance. Two groups were rated as most "at risk"—inner city children and poor/low-income children. Ratings for these two groups were significantly higher than for all other groups rated.

Conversely, the two groups seen as least "at risk" were rural students and home-schooled students. The ratings for these two groups of students were significantly lower than ratings for all other groups rated.

	Average Rating
Inner-city children	3.53
Poor or low-income children	3.48
Minority children	3.00
Learning-disabled children	2.96
Children in foster care	2.95
Physically-handicapped children	2.86
Children in rural schools	2.57
Home-schooled children	2.33

Note: Higher scores indicate greater perceived risk. Means that differ in magnitude by .24 (HSD) are significantly different at the $p < .01$ level.

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After rating each group individually, respondents were asked to select the one group they felt was the most at risk for receiving a below average education. A plurality of respondents indicated that inner-city students were the group most at risk. Parallel to the results of the analysis of rating scores, home-schooled children and children in rural schools were least likely to be identified as the group most at risk of the choices below.

	Frequency	Percent
Inner-city children	157	31.0
Poor or low-income children	91	18.0
Learning-disabled children	50	9.9
Minority children	46	9.1
Physically-handicapped children	40	7.9
Children in foster care	31	6.1
No group at risk	28	5.5
Home-schooled children	24	4.7
Children in rural schools	23	4.5
DK	14	2.8
RF	2	.4
Total	506	100.0

Likelihood of College Attendance Among High-Risk Populations

To compare perceptions of risk with expected educational outcomes, respondents were next asked to rate each of the high-risk groups in terms of likelihood of college attendance. Respondents were asked to rate each group in terms of likelihood of college attendance compared to the typical student attending an Ohio public school. Ratings were made on 5-point scales, from much less likely (1) to much more likely (5). Rating scores were analyzed with a repeated-measures analysis of variance.

Complementing the results of the previous analysis, those groups least "at risk" were also rated as most likely to attend college —home-schooled students and rural students. Poor or low-income students were rated less likely to attend college, consistent with the aforementioned finding that the high perceived cost of college is still likely a barrier to increased college attendance.

	Average Rating
Poor or low-income children	2.24
Learning-disabled children	2.28
Inner-city children	2.50
Children in foster care	2.50
Physically-handicapped children	2.63
Minority children	2.91
Children in rural schools	3.20
Home-schooled children	3.55

Note: Higher scores indicate greater perceived likelihood of college attendance. Means that differ in magnitude by .22 (HSD) are significantly different at the p < .01 level.

The Unseen Risks

Home-Schooled Students

Interestingly, home-schooled students were seen as least at risk for negative educational outcomes and most likely to attend college —despite the fact that they are taught by untrained teachers, lack facilities, and don't have standard curriculum requirements. However, this is consistent with the perception that individualized attention and increased parent involvement are among the most critical factors in academic success, an advantage that apparently outweighs the risks involved in the public's view.

Children in Substitute Care

The risks for children in foster care, however, appear to be largely unrecognized. They are seen as significantly less at risk than most other groups evaluated —only 6 percent of respondents identified children in foster care as most at risk of the groups evaluated.

According to Education Attainment and Outcomes for Children and Youth Served by the Foster Care System: A Review of the Literature, a recent report prepared by the Casey Family Foundation, the evidence shows that children in substitute care have special educational needs and difficulty adjusting to adult life.

- Approximately 25 percent of all children in substitute care are eligible for Special Education Services; 37 percent to 67 percent of children in substitute care are functioning below grade level; 66 percent of high school aged children in substitute care repeat at least one grade.
- Youth in substitute care leave high school without a diploma at a significantly higher rate and are less likely to earn a diploma or GED later in life.
- Only 2 percent of children in substitute care go on to college, regardless of grades or test scores.
- Children entering substitute care before age 11 and remaining for at least nine years, or those who enter after age 11 exhibited the lowest educational and occupational attainments.

Despite the best efforts of the child-serving community, there will not be improved outcomes for these children without a focus on increasing educational success for Ohio's children in substitute care. The focus must shift from merely ensuring students survive to ensuring children are prepared to take their place as productive citizens.

Rural Students

Finally, although rural students were also seen as at significantly lower risk, they may often be at significantly greater risk than poor children from urban areas. According to the National Science Foundation, Central Appalachia, including regions of Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, is characterized by lagging student performance, depressed economic development, and persistent isolation from opportunities.

While urban poverty is often highly visible, rural poverty and its impact on children are often invisible. Critical community services such as housing, day care, education, transportation, health care and elder care are often inadequate or unavailable, and resources are often controlled by outsiders or those who rely on access to a low-paid workforce. Schools must prepare students to join a workforce that does not exist in the local community.*

Students in rural and Appalachian areas of Ohio attend schools with some of the highest poverty levels and lowest per pupil expenditures in the state. According to Ohio's Coalition of Rural and Appalachian Schools and the Ohio Appalachian Center for Higher Education:

- Appalachian Ohio covers almost 1/3 of Ohio's geographic area, but the number of inhabitants per square mile is 1/3 that of the state average. Less than 15 percent of Ohio's population lives in these 29 counties.
- Average expenditure per student per year in Appalachian Ohio schools is approximately $700.00 below the state average.
- The college attendance rate for Ohio Appalachian students is 30 percent compared to 41 percent for the rest of Ohio and 62 percent for the U.S.
- In 1995, 8.8 percent of Ohio Appalachian adults had a four-year college degree, compared to the Ohio average of 17 percent and the U.S. average of 21.3 percent.
- Twenty-four of the 29 counties in Appalachian Ohio have poverty levels above the state average; the adjusted gross income per taxpayer is typically $7,000.00 below the state average.

Addressing these problems will require community-based, systemic efforts to ensure that students receive a solid educational foundation while they also have access to appropriate resources that can ease their transition into the modern workforce.

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* National Science Foundation, Conference on Economic Development, Education, and Community Engagement in Rural Persistent Poverty Communities,1999. (White Paper).

V. Early Childhood Education

Ohioans recognize the benefits of early education and preparation for school. Eighty-two percent agreed that educational activities as early as age 1 or 2 are important to prepare children for school, and 86 percent believe that children who attend day care, preschool, or Head Start are better prepared when they enter first grade. Furthermore, there was a willingness to allocate additional tax dollars to provide early childhood educational programs for all children from birth to five years old in Ohio.

Research has demonstrated that preschool can produce significant positive effects in children's intellectual development and can enhance social responsiveness—without disrupting the mother-child attachment process. Furthermore, economic analyses indicate significant benefits result from an investment in early education—as much as a $7.00 return by age 24 for every $1.00 invested in high-quality preschool education.*

The belief that early childhood education is important is also clear in respondents' attitudes toward reading to children: 63 percent of survey respondents indicated that parents should start reading to their children at birth or in the first year of life. Female respondents, on average, believed reading should begin earlier than did male respondents.

Do you agree or disagree: Educational activities as early as age 1 or 2 are important in preparing children for school.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	213	42.1
Agree	202	39.9
No opinion	9	1.8
Disagree	67	13.2
Disagree strongly	12	2.4
DK	3	.6
Total	506	100.0

Are you personally willing to spend more money in taxes for early childhood education programs, aimed at children from birth to five years old?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	309	61.1
No	161	31.8
Unsure	33	6.5
DK	2	.4
RF	1	.2
Total	506	100.0

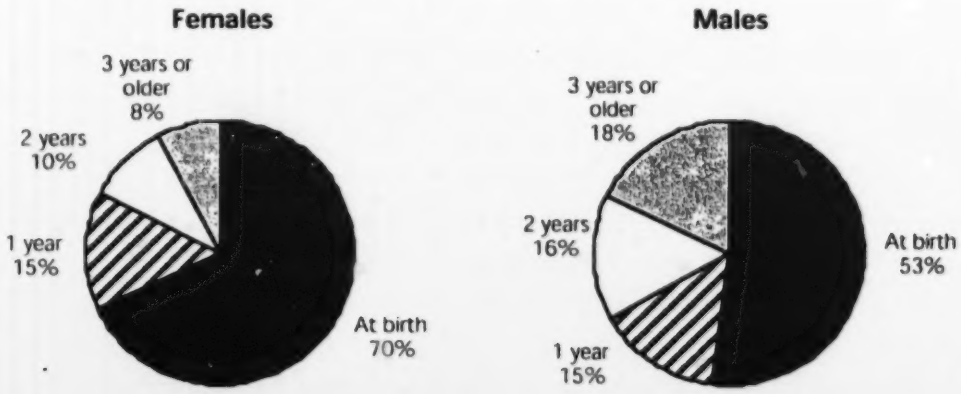
* Ramey, C. & Ramey, S. Early Experience, Brain Development, and School Performance, 1999. Document available from the Civitan International Research Center, University of Alabama, Birmingham.

At what age do you think parents should begin reading to their children?

	Frequency	Percent
At birth or less than 1 year	317	62.6
1 year old	68	13.4
2 years old	66	13.0
3 years old	42	8.3
4 years old	6	1.2
5 years old	6	1.2
6 years or older	1	.2
Total	506	100.0

Female respondents, usually the primary caregivers of infants and young children, recognize the importance of early reading experiences for infants: 70 percent of females recognized that reading to children should begin at birth compared to only 53 percent of males.

At What Age Should Parents Begin Reading to Their Children?



Reading to children from birth plays an important part in brain development. Even though infants cannot grasp the meaning of words, their capacity for language grows as the parts of the brain responsible for speech and language are stimulated.[1] Early experiences with language like reading have a decisive impact on the architecture of a baby's developing brain.

The development of early literacy skills through early exposure to books and stories is a critical component in learning to read, and research shows that children who are read to from an early age are more successful in learning to read. [1]

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that "pediatricians prescribe reading activities along with other instructions given to parents at the time of well-child visits." The President of the Academy, Dr. Robert Hannemann, stated: "We strongly recommend daily reading to children from six months of age." [5]

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[1] Shore, Rima. (1997). *Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development*, New York: Families and Work Institute.

[1] Snow, C. E., & Ninio, A. (1986). "The Contacts of Literacy: What Children Learn from Learning to Read Books." In W. H. Teale & E. Sulzby (Ed.) *Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading*, Norwood, NJ.

[5] Press statement, American Academy of Pediatrics, April 16, 1997.

Do you believe children who attend day care, preschool or Head Start are better prepared or less prepared to learn when they enter the first grade than students who do not attend a preschool program?

	Frequency	Percent
Much better prepared	266	52.6
Somewhat better prepared	167	33.0
Same	37	7.3
Somewhat less prepared	16	3.2
Much less prepared	7	1.4
DK	12	2.4
RF	1	.2
Total	506	100.0

Would you favor or oppose publicly funded preschool programs for all children in the state of Ohio?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly favor	206	40.7
Somewhat favor	156	30.8
Undecided	30	5.9
Somewhat oppose	60	11.9
Strongly oppose	50	9.9
DK	4	.8
Total	506	100.0

VI. Education in the Formative Years

Overall, public schools in Ohio received a grade of "C+" although respondents perceived the overall quality of Ohio's schools as declining in the past 10 years. Respondents from urban areas were more critical of Ohio schools than were respondents from suburban areas, rural areas, or small towns. When it comes to grading their own local schools, however, respondents were less critical. Local schools received, on average, a grade of "B."

A critical view of public schools in general was also evident in estimates of Ohio's high school graduation rate. On average, respondents estimated the overall graduation rate to be significantly lower than it is in actuality—81 percent. In fact, more than half the respondents estimated the statewide graduation rate to be below 80 percent. Respondents from urban areas estimated the state graduation rate to be significantly lower than respondents from suburban areas, rural areas, or small towns. Minority respondents' estimates were significantly lower than those of Caucasian respondents.

Respondents were nearly evenly split as to whether education is better or worse today compared to the education they received as children. Interestingly, however, when comparing the attitudes of respondents who currently have children under the age of 18 to those who do not, a statistically significant difference emerged such that parents of children 18 or younger were more favorable towards their local schools. This is significant because parents are likely to have more exposure to schools' current improvement efforts and, as a result, may offer a more accurate assessment of the current state of education.

As Ohioans look for ways to build a stronger education system, they seek ways to increase individualized student attention and increased parent involvement. Although Ohioans are willing to spend more on education, they want to be certain that schools currently manage their funds in the most efficient manner: Ohioans need assurance that current expenditures are being allocated in a way that maximizes the efficiency of each dollar. Compounding the problem, however, there is a lack of awareness as to how much money schools actually spend per student (see Section III).

Students are often given the grades A through F to describe the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools, kindergarten through 12th grade in Ohio, were graded in the same way. Using the A through F scale, how would you grade Ohio's public schools, in general?

	Frequency	Percent
A	30	5.9
B	147	29.1
C	210	41.5
D	63	12.5
F	19	3.8
DK	35	6.9
RF	2	.4
Total	506	100.0

Over the past ten years, would you say the quality of Ohio's public schools has been getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same?

	Frequency	Percent
Much better	28	5.5
Somewhat better	89	17.6
Same	175	34.6
Somewhat worse	122	24.1
Much worse	56	11.1
DK	36	7.1
Total	506	100.0

Using the scale of A through F, what grade would you give your local public schools, grades K-12?

	Frequency	Percent
A	64	12.6
B	184	36.4
C	153	30.2
D	62	12.3
F	27	5.3
DK	16	3.2
Total	506	100.0

As you look back on your own experience in K-12, would you say that today children in your community receive an education that is better, worse, or the same as you received?

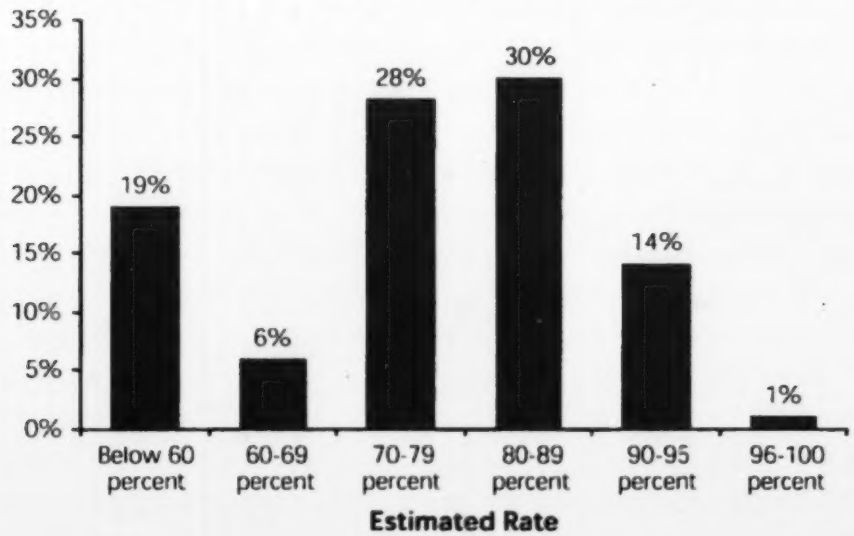
	Frequency	Percent
Much better	86	17.0
Somewhat better	95	18.8
Same	105	20.8
Somewhat worse	114	22.5
Much worse	87	17.2
DK	18	3.6
RF	1	.2
Total	506	100.0

What do you estimate Ohio's overall high school graduation rate to be? Specifically, what percentage of 9th graders go on to graduate with a high school diploma in four years?

Mean	73.3 percent
Median	75.0 percent
Mode	80.0 percent

Respondents' estimates were generally quite accurate, although slightly skewed towards a lower rate. According to the 2000 Annual Report on Education Progress in Ohio, Ohio has a graduation rate of 81.4 percent.

Estimates of Ohio's High School Graduation Rate



Respondents from urban areas estimated a statistically significant lower high school graduation rate than respondents from suburban areas, rural areas, or small towns.

Type of Community	Estimate
Urban	68.3 percent
Suburban	73.6 percent
Small town	75.7 percent
Rural	74.8 percent

In addition, minority (African-American, Hispanic and Asian) respondents estimated a statistically significant lower high school graduation rate than Caucasian respondents.

Race of Respondent	Estimate
Caucasian	74.6 percent
African-American, Hispanic, Asian or another race	66.2 percent

Problems and Solutions: Improving the Quality of Ohio's Schools

To assess Ohioans' priorities in terms of initiatives that might improve the quality of Ohio's schools, respondents were first asked to rate several potential initiatives in terms of their importance on a 5-point scale, from very important (1) to very unimportant (5). Next, they were asked to pick which initiative they saw as most important.

Inferred Priorities

First, to calculate respondents' inferred priorities based on their ratings of importance, average rating scores for each initiative were analyzed using a repeated measures analysis of variance. This analysis revealed statistically significant differences in respondents' importance scores.

Three items emerged as most important: More efficient management of money by schools, increasing parent involvement in the classroom, and stricter discipline. Furthermore, two of these items—more efficient management of money by schools and increased parent involvement—were rated as more important than all other items rated, a statistically significant difference.

Two items—renovating or replacing school facilities and using proficiency tests to determine promotion to the next grade—were rated less important than the other items rated, a statistically significant difference.

These results are summarized in the table below.

Initiative	**Average Rating**
More efficient management of money by schools	1.30
Increasing parent involvement in the classroom	1.32
Stricter discipline	1.47
More mentoring or tutoring programs	1.56
Smaller class sizes	1.59
Increasing early childhood education	1.68
Providing higher salaries for teachers	1.82
Increased public financial support for schools	1.84
Renovating or building new school facilities	2.05
Using proficiency tests to determine whether or not children should move on to the next grade	2.84

Note: Means that differ in magnitude by .21 (HSD) are significantly different at the $p < .01$ level.

Stated Priorities

After rating each item individually, respondents were asked to choose which one initiative they considered most important in improving the quality of Ohio's schools. The top three choices correspond to the top three importance ratings: increasing parent involvement in the classroom, stricter discipline, and more efficient management of money by schools.

Of these three, increased parent involvement was selected most often as the most important way to improve the quality of Ohio's schools. Comparing these results to the analysis of importance ratings indicates that although all three are seen as very important, increasing parent involvement is perceived to have the greatest impact.

Also, parallel to the results of the importance rating analysis, the two initiatives judged as having the least impact on improving Ohio's educational system were renovating or replacing school facilities and using proficiency tests to determine whether children should advance to the next grade. Less than five percent of respondents indicated that either of these initiatives would have the greatest impact.

Initiative	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Increasing parent involvement in the classroom	140	27.7
Stricter discipline	100	19.8
More efficient management of money by schools	59	11.7
Smaller class sizes	48	9.5
More mentoring or tutoring programs	37	7.3
Providing higher salaries for teachers	30	5.9
Increasing early childhood education	27	5.3
Increased public financial support for schools	24	4.7
Renovating or building new school facilities	14	2.8
Using proficiency tests to determine whether or not children should move on to the next grade	8	1.6
None are important	10	2.0
DK	8	1.6
RF	1	.2
Total	506	100.0

Who Has the Influence to Effect Change?

A similar analysis was performed to investigate which individuals or organizations are perceived as having the greatest impact on improving the educational system. Respondents were first asked to rate several individuals and organizations in terms of how influential they are in improving the educational system on a 5-point scale, from not at all influential (1) to very influential (5). Next, they were asked to pick which individual or organization they saw as having the greatest influence in improving education.

First, to calculate respondents' inferred priorities based on their influence ratings, average rating scores for each individual or organization were analyzed using a repeated measures analysis of variance. This analysis revealed statistically significant differences in respondents' ratings.

Two groups emerged as most important: teachers and parents. These two groups were rated as having more influence than all others rated, a statistically significant difference. The governor and teachers' unions were rated as least influential. Ratings for these two options were significantly lower than ratings for all other individuals or groups.

Influence Ratings

	Average Rating
Teachers	4.10
Parents	3.96
Ohio Department of Education	3.80
School administrators	3.70
Local school boards	3.61
The Ohio Legislature	3.50
The Governor	3.39
Teachers' unions	3.22

Note: Means that differ in magnitude by .22 (HSD) are significantly different at the $p < .01$ level

After rating each item individually, respondents were asked to choose which one individual or group they considered most important in improving the quality of Ohio's schools. The top choices correspond to the top ratings of influence: teachers and parents.

Parents were most often selected as having the most impact in improving education. This is also parallel to the aforementioned results of the analysis comparing the perceived importance of educational initiatives that indicated that increasing parent involvement in the classroom would be expected to have the greatest impact.

Who has the most impact in improving education?

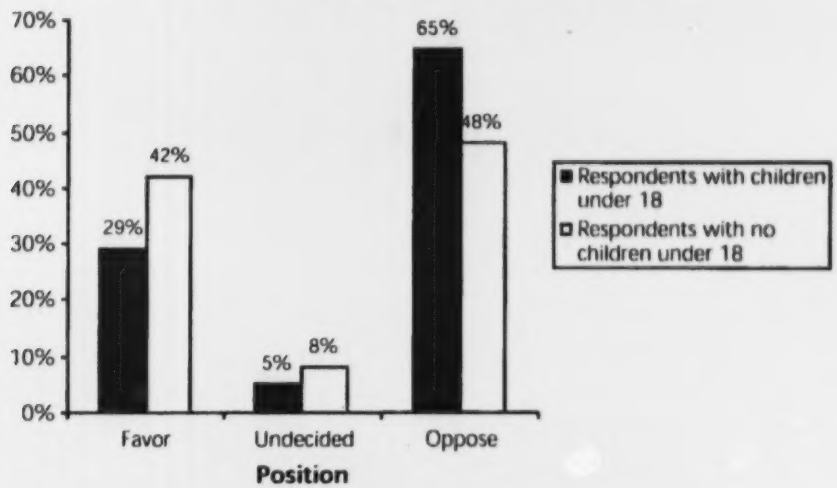
	Frequency	Percent
Parents	149	29.4
Teachers	132	26.1
Ohio Department of Education	67	13.2
The Governor	44	8.7
The Ohio Legislature	42	8.3
Local school boards	25	4.9
School administrators	22	4.3
Teachers' unions	15	3.0
DK	10	2.0
Total	506	100.0

Do you favor or oppose expanding proficiency testing of Ohio school students to every grade as a requirement for promotion to the next grade?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly favor	100	19.8
Somewhat favor	86	17.0
Undecided	35	6.9
Somewhat oppose	81	16.0
Strongly oppose	197	38.9
DK	7	1.4
Total	506	100.0

Respondents who had one or more children under the age of 18 currently living in their household were significantly more opposed to expanding proficiency tests than were respondents with no children under the age of 18.

Attitudes Toward Expanding Proficiency Tests



Do you favor or oppose...

A state takeover of public school districts that do not meet minimum standards of student proficiency.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly favor	82	16.2
Somewhat favor	116	22.9
Undecided	75	14.8
Somewhat oppose	81	16.0
Strongly oppose	141	27.9
DK	10	2.0
RF	1	.2
Total	506	100.0

Publicly funded charter schools, or independent public schools that operate outside traditional regulations and policies.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly favor	83	16.4
Somewhat favor	109	21.5
Undecided	66	13.0
Somewhat oppose	118	23.3
Strongly oppose	110	21.7
DK	20	4.0
Total	506	100.0

Do you agree or disagree:

Everyone in the community should be more involved with local public schools.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	195	38.5
Agree	250	49.4
No opinion	21	4.2
Disagree	35	6.9
Strongly disagree	3	.6
RF	2	.4
Total	506	100.0

School teachers and principals need clear standards on what children should know and be able to do.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	232	45.8
Agree	240	47.4
No opinion	15	3.0
Disagree	14	2.8
Strongly disagree	3	.6
DK	1	.2
RF	1	.2
Total	506	100.0

VII. School Facilities

Ohio is in the process of spending nearly $23 billion in state and local funds on school facilities construction and renovation. Research from the federal General Accounting Office shows that Ohio ranks in the bottom 20 percent of states on several key indicators of school building quality. According to the Ohio Supreme Court in the recent *DeRolph* decision:

> The task at hand is not one to be taken lightly. One-half of Ohio's school buildings are fifty years old or older. Constructing and maintaining school buildings is an ongoing process, and this court recognizes that it would be unreasonable to require the General Assembly to remedy overnight what has taken decades of neglect to develop, yet there remains an extensive amount of work to be done in order to educate Ohio students in "safe and healthy learning" environments. Continuing funding in this area is of the utmost importance.

Do Ohioans fully appreciate the potential benefits of upgrading school facilities? Survey respondents generally supported the notion of allocating more tax dollars for the purpose of updating school facilities, although 60 percent of respondents indicated they would rather see outdated facilities renovated to include more modern features rather than see them replaced entirely.

Respondents also indicated that they would favor greater community participation in the development of new school facilities—73 percent were in favor of inviting members of the general public to participate in the design and planning of new schools.

Finally, although a majority of respondents—76 percent—agree that modern school facilities contribute to better education, survey results indicated that this issue is likely to be viewed as less of a priority when evaluated in the context of other issues, such as improving schools' management of funds, increasing parent involvement, and implementing stricter disciplinary measures (see Section IV).

Do you favor or oppose making state tax dollars available to renovate or replace old, outdated school buildings?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly favor	201	39.7
Somewhat favor	201	39.7
Undecided	30	5.9
Somewhat oppose	41	8.1
Strongly oppose	25	4.9
DK	6	1.2
RF	2	.4
Total	506	100.0

Do you feel that old, outdated school buildings should be...?

	Frequency	Percent
Renovated to include more modern features	306	60.5
Replaced with entirely new modern facilities	127	25.1
Undecided	64	12.6
DK	7	1.4
RF	2	.4
Total	506	100.0

Do you favor or oppose inviting members of the general public to participate in the design and planning of new school facilities?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly favor	197	38.9
Somewhat favor	172	34.0
Undecided	32	6.3
Somewhat oppose	49	9.7
Strongly oppose	47	9.3
DK	7	1.4
Refused	2	.4
Total	506	100.0

Do you agree or disagree: Modern, up-to-date school facilities contribute to better education.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	131	25.9
Agree	255	50.4
No opinion	29	5.7
Disagree	86	17.0
Disagree strongly	3	.6
DK	2	.4
Total	506	100.0

Do you agree or disagree: Schools with smaller enrollment promote higher student achievement.

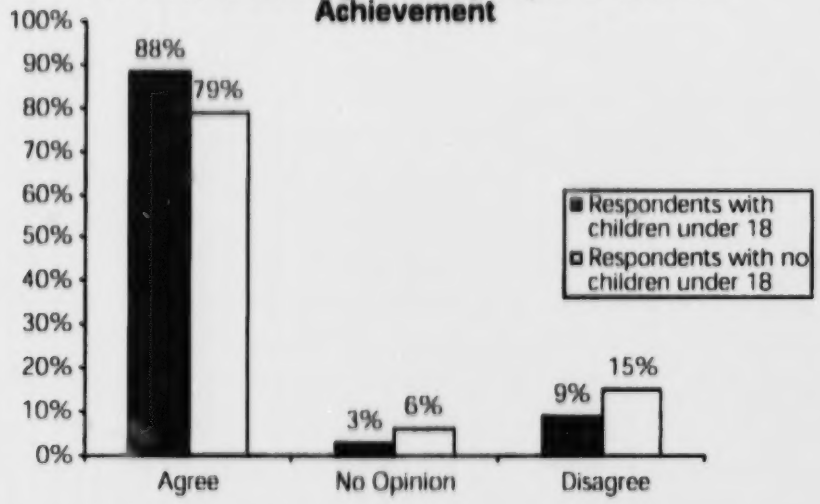
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	152	30.0
Agree	222	43.8
No opinion	53	10.5
Disagree	71	14.0
Strongly disagree	4	.8
DK	4	.8
Total	506	100.0

Reducing the average class size to 18 students per class would significantly improve student achievement.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	203	40.1
Agree	214	42.3
No opinion	22	4.3
Disagree	58	11.5
Strongly disagree	6	1.2
DK	3	.6
Total	506	100.0

Research shows that classes of smaller size in the primary grades are academically superior to larger classes. A small class-size advantage has been demonstrated for inner-city, urban, suburban, and rural schools; for male and female students; and for white and minority students alike.* Although most respondents saw the benefits of smaller class sizes, parents of children under the age of 18 were more likely to agree that smaller class sizes significantly improve student achievement.

Reducing the Average Class Size to 18 Students Per Class Would Significantly Improve Student Achievement



* Finn, J. (1998). Class Size and Students at Risk: What is Known? What is Next? National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students.

VIII. Higher Education and Access to College

Survey participants expressed more confidence in Ohio's public higher education system than they did in Ohio's public elementary and secondary schools. Higher education in Ohio earned high marks from survey respondents—65.8 percent graded Ohio's public higher education system an "A" or "B." Approximately 40 percent feel that the quality of Ohio's higher education system has improved in the past 10 years, and 60 percent believe that the opportunity to enroll in college has increased in that time as well. Male respondents, however, were slightly more optimistic about the favorable changes in higher education compared to female respondents.

Poll results indicated a widespread perception that a college education is readily accessible today to those who choose to pursue it. Eighty percent of respondents agreed with the statement that "Anyone can earn a college degree if that is what they really want to do." Nonetheless, some significant barriers still exist, such as the aforementioned perception that tuition is far more costly than it really is (see Section III).

Despite perceived barriers, the many efforts to spread the message that a college education is universally accessible have been quite effective in creating the impression that a college degree is attainable. Survey respondents significantly overestimated the proportion of Ohioans who have completed a four-year degree, and recognized the higher earning potential for workers with a four-year college degree. This is an indication that the value of a college degree and its importance in the present job market are much more salient today than they have been in years past.

Using the scale of A through F, what grade would you give Ohio's higher education system?

	Frequency	Percent
A	90	17.8
B	243	48.0
C	108	21.3
D	8	1.6
F	4	.8
DK	53	10.5
Total	506	100.0

Over the past ten years, would you say the quality of Ohio's higher education system has been getting better, worse, or staying about the same?

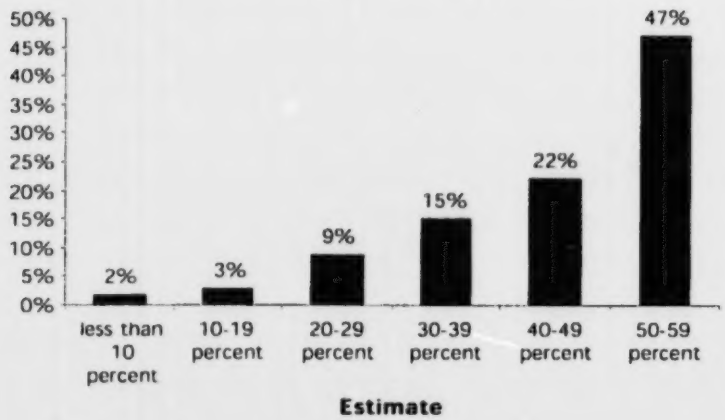
	Frequency	Percent
Much better	60	11.9
Somewhat better	142	28.1
Same	221	43.7
Somewhat worse	28	5.5
Much worse	13	2.6
DK	42	8.3
Total	506	100.0

Approximately what percentage of Ohio adults would you estimate have graduated from a college or university with a four-year degree?

Mean 48%
Median 49%
Mode 40%

At the time this report was written, the most recent estimates available, estimates from the 1990 census, indicate that just 17 percent of Ohioans had earned a four-year college degree. Assuming this estimate is still accurate, respondents significantly overestimated the proportion of Ohio adults with a college degree.

Estimates of the Percentage of Ohioans with a Four-year College Degree



Although no official estimate of the current proportion of Ohioans who have earned at least a four-year degree is available, it can likely be assumed that the proportion of adults with college degrees has increased over the last ten years. The proportion of adults in the present survey sample who had completed a four-year degree—randomly selected statewide—is 23 percent. Interestingly, even compared to this figure, survey respondents drastically overestimated the proportion of Ohio adults who had completed a college degree.

Comparison of estimates generated by respondents' education attainment revealed a statistically significant difference, such that those respondents who had not completed a college degree estimated the proportion to be higher, on average, than did respondents who had completed a college degree. Both average estimates, however, exceeded 40 percent.

Estimates by Educational Attainment:

Completed high school degree or less	49.2%
Completed two-year, four-year, or advanced degree	45.1%

In general, do you think that the opportunity for a high school student to enroll in college has increased, decreased, or remained about the same compared to ten years ago?

	Frequency	Percent
Increased greatly	122	24.1
Increased somewhat	181	35.8
Same	121	23.9
Decreased somewhat	36	7.1
Decreased greatly	23	4.5
DK	23	4.5
Total	506	100.0

Do you agree or disagree: Anyone can earn a college degree if that is what they really want to do.

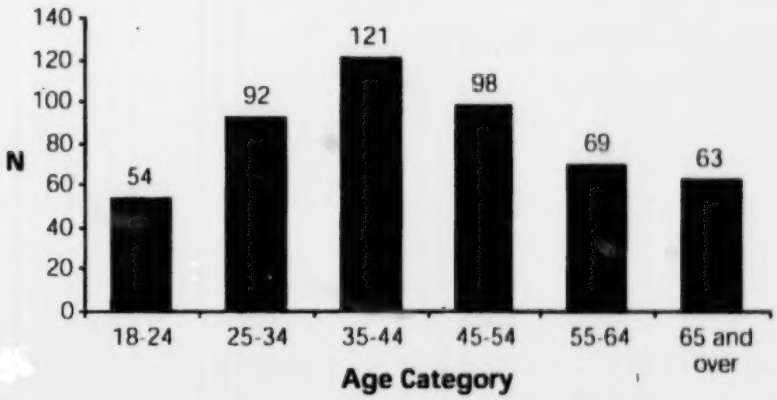
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	196	38.7
Agree	209	41.3
No opinion	11	2.2
Disagree	73	14.4
Disagree strongly	17	3.4
Total	506	100.0

IX. Demographics

Have you ever volunteered for an elementary, middle, or high school in Ohio?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	309	61.1
No	194	38.3
DK	1	.2
RF	2	.4
Total	506	100.0

Age



Mean 45
Median 43
Mode 42

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

	Frequency	Percent
Elementary school	5	1.0
Some high school, no degree	35	6.9
High school graduate or GED	152	30.0
Technical or vocational school	19	3.8
Some college, no degree	97	19.2
College graduate —two-year	46	9.1
College graduate —four-year	80	15.8
Post-graduate education, no additional degree	35	6.9
Advanced degree	34	6.7
RF	3	.6
Total	506	100.0

Race

	Frequency	Percent
Caucasian	425	84.0
African-American	48	9.5
Hispanic	8	1.6
Asian	6	1.2
Another Race	13	2.6
DK	1	.2
RF	5	1.0
Total	506	100.0

Current Employment

	Frequency	Percent
Employed full time	318	62.8
Employed part time	34	6.7
Unemployed	20	4.0
Student	8	1.6
Homemaker	41	8.1
Retired	83	16.4
RF	2	.4
Total	506	100.0

Marital Status

	Frequency	Percent
Single	117	23.1
Married	262	51.8
Separated	22	4.3
Divorced	62	12.3
Widowed	39	7.7
DK	1	.2
RF	3	.6
Total	506	100.0

How many adults over age 18 live in your home?

	Frequency	Percent
1	162	32.0
2	273	54.0
3	53	10.5
4	13	2.6
5 or more	3	.6
RF	1	.4
Total	506	100.0

How many children under age 18 live in your home?

	Frequency	Percent
None	302	59.7
1	81	16.0
2	80	15.8
3	27	5.3
4	11	2.2
5 or more	2	.4
RF	3	.6
Total	506	100.0

If one or more child under 18 lives in the household, how many children are.

Age 5 or younger?

	Frequency	Percent
0	108	53.7
1	62	30.8
2 or more	30	14.9
RF	1	.5
Total	201	100.0

Age 6-10?

	Frequency	Percent
0	122	60.7
1	63	31.3
2 or more	16	8.0
Total	201	100.0

Age 11-15?

	Frequency	Percent
0	117	58.2
1	58	28.9
2 or more	26	13.1
Total	201	100.0

Age 16-18?

	Frequency	Percent
0	161	80.1
1	40	19.9
Total	201	100.0

If one or more child under 18 lives in the household, do your children currently attend.

	Yes	No
Preschool	15.9%	83.1%
Public school	62.7%	36.8%
Private school	11.4%	88.1%
Parochial school	6.5%	93.0%
Home school	2.0%	97.5%

What type of area do you live in?

	Frequency	Percent
Urban	108	21.3
Suburban	153	30.2
Small town	135	26.7
Rural	101	20.0
DK	6	1.2
Rf	3	.6
Total	506	100.0

What category best represents your total annual household income?

	Frequency	Percent
Less than $15,000	54	10.7
$15,000 - $24,999	62	12.3
$25,000 - $49,999	160	31.6
$50,000 - $75,000	109	21.5
More than $75,000	75	14.8
DK	12	2.4
Rf	34	6.7
Total	506	100.0

Sex

	Frequency	Percent
Male	227	44.9
Female	279	55.1
Total	506	100.0

U.S. Department of Education
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